

# Step 1

# Think about why you want to go to college.

- Career preparation
- Learning opportunities
- Personal goals
- Extracurricular activities
- Opportunity to make new friends

## Step 2

# Decide what is important to you in a school.

- · Type of school
- · Academic programs and degrees offered
- Location and size
- · Costs and financial aid
- Academic reputation
- Sports or extracurricular activities

# Step 2

# Get information about the schools you are considering.

- Libraries
- College representative, catalogs, electronic view books, websites, and bulletins
- High school counselors and teachers
- Internet sources, directories, and CD-ROMS
- · Working professionals

# Step 4

## Research and compare schools.

- · Make a checklist to compare pros and cons of each school
- Make campus visits
- Attend college fairs and meet with college representatives
- · Compare total costs in relation to financial aid packages

# Step 5

# Make your decision.

- · Make a final visit to your top two choices
- · Talk with your parents and counselors
- Select a school that meets your needs and preferences

## Step 6

# Comply with all deadlines.

- Admission and housing applications
- · Required institutional fees
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms

# Tips on making the most of a campus visit:

- · Tour the campus
- Talk with students
- Meet with an academic advisor or faculty member
- · Research your academic program
- · Meet with an admissions counselor
- · Verify admission requirements
- Determine the actual cost of attending the school
- · Inquire about a class visit
- Tour residence halls and eat in a dining hall if you're planning to live on campus
- · Tour the town

# Important things to remember:

- Keep a copy of all completed forms and worksheets.
- Apply for all sources of financial aid.
  You may need to reapply for financial aid each year you are in school.
- Talk to the financial aid office about how and when you will receive your aid and how it coordinates with the due dates for tuition payments.
- Know eligibility requirements for all the aid you receive.

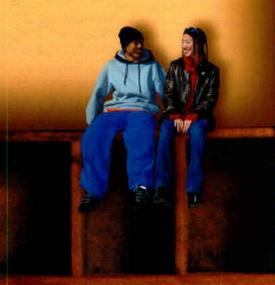
# Contact the Maryland Higher Education Commission if you have additional questions about funding your education.

Call 1-800-974-1024 or 410-260-4565

Write to MHEC at: 839 Bestgate Road, Suite 400 Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Visit www.mhec.state.md.us







# An Academic Year: Preparing for College

- □ Review your career plans and decide which type of school is right for you.
- Request admissions information and school catalogs.
- ☐ Review school web sites.
- $oldsymbol{\square}$  Obtain registration information and test dates for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and/or the American College Aptitude Test (ACT).
- Start developing a financial plan for college. Contact MHEC for more information.

# September

- ☐ Meet with college representatives who visit your high school.
- Mark your calendar with registration, admissions, and financial aid deadlines and fees.
- Ask employers, teachers, and guidance counselors for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions applications.

## October

- ☐ Take the SAT and/or ACT.
- □ Work on admissions essays.
- □ Visit your top school choices. Make appointments with faculty, staff, and students.
- □ Contact the schools' financial aid offices to determine which forms are required. (Some schools require special forms.)
- Finalize portfolios, audition tapes, writing samples, or other evidence of talent if required.

- □ Attend college fairs and financial aid nights.
- ☐ Get financial aid forms from your guidance counselor.
- □ Determine what information is necessary to complete
- Begin completing your admissions applications. Double check the deadlines for submission.
- □ Follow up to ensure letters of recommendation sent.

## December

- Pick up a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from your guidance counselor, your local library, or a college or university. DO NOT SUBMIT BEFORE JAN. 1. You can complete the form online at www.fafsa.gov. Keep a copy of the form.
- Research and apply for other financial aid.
- 🗅 Finalize your admissions applications. Many schools have online application processes. Keep a copy of all forms you submit.

1.800.974.1024 OF 410.260.4565 839 BESTGATE ROAD STE. 400 \* WRITE MHEC: ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401 www.mhec.state.md.us

- □ Submit your FAFSA to the processor as soon as possible after Jan 1. DO NOT SUBMIT BEFORE JAN. 1. You can complete the form online at www.fafsa.gov. Keep a copy of
- □ Look for financial aid awareness programs in your area.
- Ask your parents to file their tax forms as early as possible. Schools may need them to finalize your financial aid packages. Be prepared to send a copy of the tax forms to the schools, if necessary.

## February

- Research taking Advanced Placement (AP) or College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams.
- □ Rank your preferred schools.
- □ Ask your high school to send a copy of your transcript, including first-semester senior grades, to the schools to which you have applied.

- Submit tax forms to the financial aid office, if requested. Find out what outstanding items need to be completed for the financial aid office.
- Narrow your school choices and make campus visits.

- Watch the mail for school acceptance and financial aid award letters. Compare the packages based on the various costs.
- Make your final school decision and mail any deposits required.
- Check with the school you've chosen about returning financial aid award letters.
- Notify schools you will not be attending.
- Watch for other important school deadlines.

- □ Take Advanced Placement exams.
- □ Be aware of any summer orientation sessions that you must attend at the school in which you will enroll, and make plans accordingly.
- □ Finalize any summer job plans and make a plan for saving a portion of your summer earnings.
- □ Prepare a realistic student budget using your college costs, taking into consideration the cost of books, supplies, and other personal expenses.

- Plan for college orientation, transportation, and housing.
- Follow-up with financial aid office to ensure that all paperwork is complete.

- Finalize plans for school.
- □ Contact the Maryland Higher Education Commission if you have additional questions about funding your education.